

REMARKS OF
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ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR SMALL AND
DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS UTILIZATION
NASA MINORITY BUSINESS & ADVOCATES AWARDS CEREMONY
SEPTEMBER 24, 2002

- THANK YOU, LAMONT. AND WELCOME, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, AND ALL OF YOU WHO ARE A PART OF NASA'S FAMILY.
- YOU KNOW, THIS IS NOT ONLY THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF NASA'S MINORITY BUSINESS AND ADVOCATES AWARDS CEREMONY. BUT IT IS ALSO THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF MINORITY ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (MED) WEEK.
- IN FACT IT SEEMS LIKE ONLY YESTERDAY WHEN, BY PROCLAMATION, THE PRESIDENT DESIGNATED A WEEK IN THE FALL OF EACH YEAR TO HONOR AND CELEBRATE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF MINORITY BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURS.
- INDEED NATIONAL MED WEEK IS NOW THE LARGEST FEDERALLY SPONSORED ACTIVITY HELD ON BEHALF OF MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISE.
- AND RIGHT NOW, ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY, BUT ESPECIALLY HERE IN WASHINGTON, D.C., ALL KINDS OF EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS ARE GOING ON TO COMMEMORATE MINORITY BUSINESSES AND ADVOCATES. SO I THINK ITS APPROPRIATE THAT NASA, RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERYTHING ELSE GOING ON THIS WEEK, IS HOLDING ITS OWN CEREMONY TO HONOR THOSE BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS THAT HAVE GONE BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY IN SUPPORTING AMERICA'S SPACE PROGRAM.
- AND, YOU KNOW, THAT'S NOT JUST A STORY OF MINORITY INDIVIDUALS OR MINORITY OWNED BUSINESSES. IT ALSO INCLUDES THE NON-MINORITY LARGE BUSINESSES WHICH SUBCONTRACT WITH AND MENTOR MINORITY-OWNED BUSINESSES. IT INVOLVES NON-MINORITY INDIVIDUALS WHO WORK AT NASA AND SEE THE ADVANTAGE OF HAVING A DIVERSE SUPPLIER BASE OF OUTSTANDING PROVIDERS OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES AND WHO GO OUT OF THEIR WAY TO ENSURE IT.
- IT INVOLVES BOTH GENDERS, WOMEN AND MEN, AND BUSINESSES OF ALL SIZES, SMALL, MEDIUM, VERY SMALL, LARGE AND SUPER

LARGE. ALL OF THESE ENTITIES COME TOGETHER TO MAKE UP ONE NASA, AND TRULY, THE ONLY WAY WE CAN CONTINUE TO BE THE GREATEST SPACE AGENCY IN THE WORLD IS WORKING AS ONE.

- AND MAYBE THAT'S THE MOST IRONIC THING OF ALL ABOUT THIS CELEBRATION: WE TAKE AN ENTITY OF CONTRACTORS WHERE WE WERE INITIALLY NOT DOING A VERY GOOD JOB. WE THEN ALL COME TOGETHER AS AN AGENCY AND PUT TOGETHER A CONTINUALLY IMPROVING PROCESS CONSISTING OF PEOPLE, TECHNIQUES, INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS, INVOLVING PRACTICALLY EVERY DIVISION AND DEPARTMENT WITHIN THE AGENCY, TO TURN A BAD STORY INTO AN OUTSTANDING STORY.
- AND IT IS ALSO IRONIC THAT THE PROFILES OF EXCELLENCE IN THE INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES THAT MAKE UP WHAT GOES INTO MAKING NASA A GREAT AGENCY ARE BEST EXEMPLIFIED THROUGH THEIR PERFORMANCE IN OUR SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM.
- AND THAT BRINGS ME TO THE SECOND REASON I'M UP HERE TODAY. NOTHING SUCCESSFUL CAN CONTINUE TO BE SUCCESSFUL WITHOUT EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP. AND I THINK WE ARE SO FORTUNATE, AND THAT THE SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM AT NASA IS SO FORTUNATE, TO HAVE THE LEADER THAT WE HAVE TODAY.
- THERE ARE THREE VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS THE NASA ADMINISTRATOR HAS ALREADY MADE TO THIS PROGRAM IN A BIG WAY.
- ONE IS HIS EMPHASIS IN NURTURING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PEOPLE HE HAS WORKED WITH AND WILL HAVE TO WORK WITH -- ESPECIALLY INTER-AGENCY RELATIONSHIPS. ONE CAN HAVE ALL THE LAWS AND REGULATIONS IN THE WORLD ON THEIR SIDE. BUT IN THE END PEOPLE DO THINGS FOR PEOPLE.
- AND THERE IS NOT ONE ESSENTIAL DOOR THAT I HAVE WALKED IN IN THE PAST 8 MONTHS, INCLUDING THOSE OF CONGRESSIONAL STAFFERS, REGULATORY AGENCIES, INDUSTRY GROUPS, WHERE SOMEONE DID NOT SAY THAT THEY KNEW THE ADMINISTRATOR IN A FORMER LIFE. AND BECAUSE THEY WERE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES THEY MADE MY WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM MUCH EASIER AND EVEN IMPROVED SOME OF THE EXISTING ONES, THUS, MAKING THE NASA SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM MORE POPULAR AND MORE READILY RECEIVED.
- HIS SECOND CONTRIBUTION WAS PUTTING AGENCY FOCUS ON THE PRESIDENT'S MANAGEMENT AGENDA. BECAUSE OF THAT I THINK

THAT OUR OFFICE AND THE SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM IS OPERATING MORE PRODUCTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY. THE AGENCY EMPHASIS ON THE “ EXPANDED ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE,” WHICH IS ONE OF THE FIVE INITIATIVES OF THE PMA FOR EXAMPLE, PROMPTED OUR OFFICE TO ENHANCE ITS WEBSITE TO WHAT I THINK IS THE BEST SMALL BUSINESS WEBSITE IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

- THE IMPROVED FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE OF THE AGENDA HAS PROMPTED US TO DEVELOP AN AUTOMATED ELECTRONIC SYSTEM FOR MORE ACCURATE REPORTING OF SMALL AND DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS UTILIZATION FROM OUR MAJOR PRIME CONTRACTORS. AND THE BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE INTEGRATION INITIATIVE OF THE AGENDA HAS HELPED US TO BETTER ALIGN OUR BUDGET WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF OUR PROGRAM.
- BUT THE THIRD AND MOST IMPRESSIVE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ADMINISTRATOR IS (AND GET READY FOR THIS OXYMORON) HIS OVERWHELMING UNDERSTATED SUPPORT FOR SMALL AND DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS UTILIZATION AT NASA.
- HE HAS BEEN SUPPORTING OF EVERYTHING WE’VE DONE, BUT IN A VERY UNASSUMING MANNER. FOR EXAMPLE, THIS IS HIS THIRD MAJOR SMALL BUSINESS SPEECH IN JUST EIGHT MONTHS; A RARE FOR ANY AGENCY HEAD IN WHICH THE FOCUS OF THE AGENCY ITSELF IS NOT SMALL BUSINESS;
- SECONDLY, WHENEVER THERE IS ANY OUTSIDE CORRESPONDENCE THAT COMES TO HIM WITH REGARD TO SMALL BUSINESS, I SEE HIS HANDWRITTEN NOTES ON IT, WHEN IT’S ROUTED TO ME, INSISTING THAT WE BE SURE THAT NASA IS RESPONSIVE, WHETHER IT BE A CONFERENCE, A MEETING, OR A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION. HIS INTEREST IN THESE MATTERS ARE CONSISTENT ACROSS THE BOARD, WHETHER THE LETTER IS FROM A CONGRESSMAN OR AN INDIVIDUAL OR A MINORITY BUSINESS ORGANIZATION.
- MOST OF ALL, AND THE THING I’M MOST PROUD OF, IS HIS AUGUST 12, 2002, MEMORANDUM WHICH HE SENT TO THE HEADS OF ALL THE DEPARTMENTS AND FIELD CENTERS AT NASA LETTER IN WHICH HE GIVES AN UNQUALIFIED ENDORSEMENT TO THE SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM, BUT AT THE SAME TIME CHALLENGING EVERYONE TO DO BETTER. AND, IF I CAN READ A PORTION OF THAT LETTER TO YOU: “AS NASA’S ADMINISTRATOR, I WANT BOTH OUR PERFORMANCE AND OUR REPUTATION IN THIS MOST IMPORTANT ARENA TO BE MAINTAINED AND EVEN IMPROVED UPON...”

- WHAT MORE COULD WE ASK FOR. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, I AM PROUD TO INTRODUCE MY BOSS, NASA ADMINISTRATOR SEAN O'KEEFE. SIR....